Southern Gold Society, Founded 2001

August 15, 2010

Welcome New Members!

Please direct inquiries about membership to the SGS website's About Us page.

News You Can Use

SGS Discussion Board Closed

Due to inactivity, the Web site's discussion board has been closed. We wish to thank David Ginsburg for moderating the New Orleans Mint forum.

Writer's Needed

One of the purposes of the SGS is to "enjoy each member's knowledge." This newsletter is one of the ways this numismatic knowledge is dispersed. *The frequency of the newsletter is driven by the number of submissions for publication*. The editor of the SGS eNewsletter needs new material and welcomes the opportunity to review your original article for publication. Articles should be relevant to the study of the gold coins and related history of the Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans branch mints and private minters Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers. If you do a presentation at a gathering or other venue, consider compiling your notes into an article. Do not worry about the grammar. The editor will do the rest. Electronic manuscripts should be submitted by email to dcnumisma@charter.net.

Feature

SGS Gathering

By Carl Lester

On Friday, April 23, 2010, after the Georgia Numismatic Association Coin Show was over for the day, over twenty members and guests of the Southern Gold Society met at the Dalton Depot Restaurant and Trackside Café for an evening of food, fellowship, and fun. The Society treated attendees to cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, with the rest of the meal being "Dutch Treat."

For the program that evening, Yours Truly related the story of the acquisition and research associated with my 1849-D gold dollar from the Louis Eliasberg Collection. I also passed around the piece, in its PCGS holder, along with a one-page pictorial display that I had recently prepared.

The tale begins in 1982, the same year that I purchased my very first Dahlonega gold piece. In late October of that year, Bowers and Ruddy Galleries auctioned "The United States Gold Coin Collection," the name given to the gold coin portion of the collection of Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. I was only getting started collecting Dahlonega gold coins in 1982, but I recognized the importance of the Eliasberg gold auction, nonetheless. Even though I didn't participate in the sale, I did order a softbound and hardbound set of the catalogs from Bowers and Ruddy.

Gold: Everything You Need to Know to Buy and Sell Today
By Jeff Garrett and Q. David Bowers. Foreword by Kenneth Bressett

Take a personal guided tour with two of America's best-known gold specialists.>> read more

(See Feature article)

Lot 454: A small (3.75" by 6.5") inventory book, bound in black leather, with "L. Eliasberg" stamped in gilt on the cover

Mr. Eliaberg's hand-written notes indicated that my 1849-D gold dollar was purchased in October 1940 from Abe Kosoff, as Uncirculated, for the princely sum of $7.50

After receiving the catalogs and reading about the results of the auction in the numismatic press, I realized that the just-completed event had been a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity to acquire coins from what is regarded as the most famous and important collection in the history of American numismatics. In 1950, Louis Eliasberg finished a complete set of regular-issue United States coins, a near-impossible feat that will likely never be repeated. I wished that I had been more experienced and had been in a position to acquire one of Mr. Eliasberg’s Dahlonega gold coins for my fledgling collection.

That sentiment only grew with the passage of time. I kept my “radar up” for ex-Eliasberg pieces appearing in the numismatic marketplace, but due to the quality of the coins, they had gone into tightly-held collections and thus didn’t appear for a long time. For me, it was 16 years later that opportunity finally knocked.

The occasion was the 1999 Florida United Numismatists (FUN) Auction, cataloged by Heritage. The collection, earlier owned by Leon Farmer, was dubbed the “North Georgia Collection,” which had been acquired by Douglas Winter, Jack Hancock, and Bob Harwell and was marketed under the joint venture called “The Charlotte Gold Company.” The coins being sold consisted of Mr. Farmer’s collection of Charlotte gold coins, as well as duplicates from his collection of Dahlonega gold. I believe that the core Dahlonega Collection was subsequently incorporated into the “Dukes Creek Collection.”

The Charlotte Gold Company, via private treaty, had sold part of the North Georgia Collection during the previous summer. Each coin, both in the private sale and the Heritage auction, was certified by PCGS and had “North Georgia” indicated on the certification label. Doug had faxed a copy of the private treaty list of coins to me in the summer of 1998. I purchased an 1844-D half eagle from the list, graded PCGS AU50 and with the reverse rotated 180 degrees out-of-sequence. In other words, the reverse had a “medal turn,” rather than a “coin turn.” I have a lot of fun with that coin, showing it to seasoned numismatists, who can’t figure out what’s different about the piece.

The remaining North Georgia Collection coins had been available for examination by Heritage during the fall before the FUN Convention. They were at the September Long Beach Show (where Al Adams examined them for me) and I had the opportunity to view them in person at a special exhibition at the Fay Gold Art Gallery in Buckhead (near Atlanta), which I attended with Al in late October. In general, the quality of the coins was very high, with one particular coin really capturing my interest. It was an 1849-D gold dollar that traced its provenance to the aforementioned Eliasberg Collection. It was now 16 years after the famed Eliasberg gold auction and I had an opportunity to acquire a Dahlonega gold coin from the storied collection.

The piece was described in the FUN 1999 catalog as follows: “1849-D AU58 PCGS. Nearly as nice as the ’49-D that follows but with a bit of flatness at the centers, as typically seen. There is some minor friction noted in the obverse fields but many observers will view this original, lustrous piece as fully Mint State. Both sides are enhanced by natural medium orange-gold color. Ex: Eliasberg Collection (B&R, 10/82), lot 4 as MS60.” Actually, Dave Bowers had graded the obverse MS65 and the reverse MS60 in 1982, one of only a handful of Dahlonega coins from the collection that he had graded as Mint State.

At the FUN Show, the North Georgia Collection was to be auctioned on Friday evening, January 8, 1999, at 7:00 p.m. Unfortunately, the coin that I was in pursuit of was the very first lot, so I didn’t even have time to get warmed up. I did have one ace up my sleeve, however, and that was the fact that Al Adams was bidding for me. Thus, I could rely on his experience to bring the coin home. The coin was hammered down to Al for $4,600, which brought the price realized to $5,290, including the buyer’s premium, which was “Mint State money.” Needless to say, I was thrilled to own the coin. I now had a Dahlonega gold coin from the Eliasberg Collection and it only took me a little more than 16 years!

The coin was soon submitted to PCGS, where the Eliasberg provenance was added to the certification label. The original Eliasberg gold catalog did not have any further provenance information for my 1849-D gold dollar, so unfortunately, I did not know where or when Mr. Eliasberg had obtained it.

The next chapter in this numismatic narrative occurred in 2003, when I was doing some research on the PCGS web site. In the research archives section of their web site, PCGS had listed the Eliasberg gold dollars, complete with grades (either ones that they had assigned during the certification process, or estimated grades that were based on sales room catalog notes by the PCGS principals). I noticed that my 1849-D Eliasberg gold dollar had an estimated grade of MS62. I soon re-submitted the coin and it was upgraded to MS62, a grade that was commensurate with its actual condition and price history.

Fast forward to March 2010, when Stack's was to auction the "Eliasberg & Krause Collections" in Baltimore, in conjunction with the Whitman Coin & Collectible Baltimore Expo. What piqued my interest was a number of numismatic books from the Eliasberg estate. Several of them were annotated with information not contained in the Bowers & Ruddy Eliasberg gold catalog from 1982. I was hoping that one of them might contain notes that would indicate the source of my 1849-D Eliasberg gold dollar.

The sale snuck up on me. It was Monday evening before the Baltimore Show and the books had already been shipped from Stack's Wolfeboro office to Baltimore, where they would be auctioned on Tuesday. I texted Al Adams, who was to attend the show, but he wasn't leaving for Baltimore until Wednesday and thus wouldn't be able to check the books for me.

On Tuesday morning, I contacted Stack's, who would have one of their representatives call me from the auction lot viewing room. Soon I was speaking with Stack's Greg Cohen, who examined the books that might contain contemporary coin provenance annotations. After checking the books, only lot 454 had any information about the provenance of my gold dollar. Lot 454 was a small (3.75" by 6.5") inventory book, bound in black leather, with "L. Eliasberg" stamped in gilt on the cover. It was about the right size to tuck into a shirt pocket. Mr. Eliasberg had apparently used the book to keep track of his collection, possibly at coin shows and auctions.

I was in awe as I heard Mr. Cohen tell me that Mr. Eliaberg's hand-written notes indicated that my 1849-D gold dollar was purchased in October 1940 from Abe Kosoff, as Uncirculated, for the princely sum of $7.50. I thanked Mr. Cohen profusely and promised to phone in a bid on the book shortly.

According to the Stack's web site, the lot was to have an opening bid of $2,400. I phoned my good friend, David Patton, and together we decided to phone in a bid of $5,000. We both agreed that this was no ordinary "little black book" and that the information contained therein would be of great benefit to us. I phoned Mr. Cohen and presented our bid, then kicked back to wait on the results of the auction. Both David and I felt that we had a good chance to chapter Mr. Eliasberg's inventory book. It was now late morning, with the lot to be auctioned in the early afternoon.

Later that afternoon, after checking the Stack's web site, I was absolutely stunned to find out that the book had brought $51,750, including the buyer's premium. I guess that David and I weren't so crazy for bidding $5,000 after all.

Even though our plans to bring home the Eliasberg inventory book fell short, I felt victorious, in that I now knew more about the provenance of my 1849-D Eliasberg gold dollar. I had long been a fan of Abe Kosoff's reminiscences (in Abe Kosoff Remembers), so now, in my mind, the 1849-D Kosoff-Eliasberg gold dollar had taken on an even richer glow than it had previously enjoyed.

Mission Statement

The Southern Gold Society was formed to increase the enjoyment and study of Southern gold coins and related history, through an informal, relaxed mix of education and fellowship. The society is reminiscent of those of a bygone era, in which connoisseurship and a gentlemanly appreciation of Southern gold coins is the order of the day.

Purpose

- To facilitate the enjoyment and study of the gold coins and related history of the Southern branch mints (Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans) and private Southern minters (Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers).
- To enjoy each member's knowledge and friendship in an informal manner.
- To provide a relaxed, pleasant environment in which to meet during selected coin shows and other convenient events.
- To encourage the appreciation and preservation of a Southern gold coin's original surfaces.
- To consolidate the information, resources, and talent available to enthusiasts of these historic Southern gold coins.

Annual Membership Fees

Regular $25 (January-December).

Membership for new members joining in October, November, or December extends through the next year. Checks for membership fees should be made payable to the Southern Gold Society and mailed to **David Crenshaw, P.O. Box 237, Dacula, GA 30019-0004**.

Board of Directors

David Crenshaw, Board Chair (dcnumisma@charter.net)
Carl Lester, Vice Chair (cnlester@hiwaay.net)
David Patton, Board Member (patpatton@mac.com)
Doug Winter, Board Member (dwn@ont.com)
Jeff Garrett, Board Member (coinman4u@aol.com)